

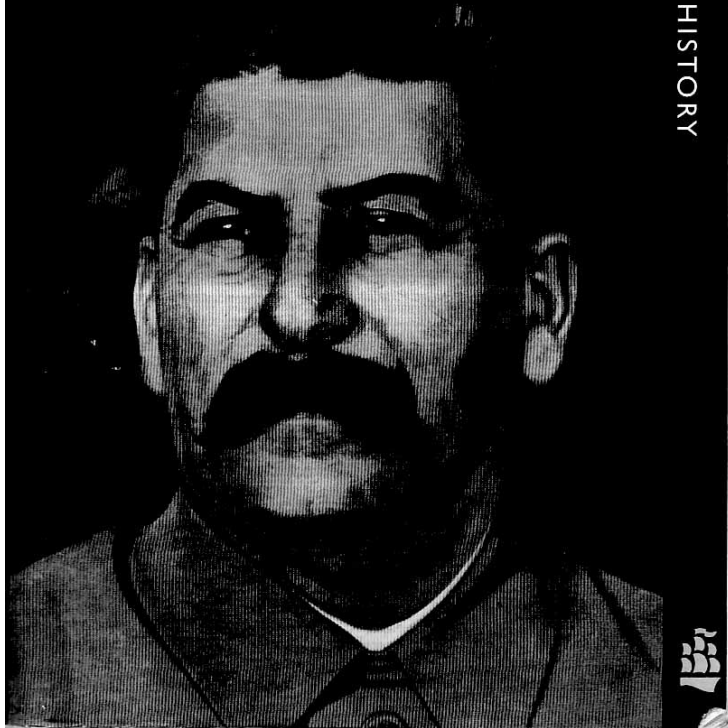
STALIN AND STALINISM

Second Edition

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SEMINAR STUDIES

IN HISTORY



CULTURE

Education changed dramatically as the entire pedagogical system was transformed. Schools were handed over to collective farms or enterprises, pupils and teachers abandoned formal learning and sought to learn through 'productive labour' or were mobilised to fulfil the plan. There was even talk of the 'withering away of the school' altogether. Universities were transferred to Vsesenkh (VSNKh) or the major economic commissariats. The majority were restructured along functional lines, involving narrow specialisms. 'Bourgeois' academics were, like school teachers, hounded out. However, by 1932 literacy was back in fashion. The socialist substitute, the *rabfak*, had produced high drop-out rates and little technical expertise. (One of those who dropped out was Nikita Khrushchev.) Selection reappeared and by the end of 1936 non-proletarians could again enter higher education. Russian nationalism was promoted and all other nations were referred to as 'younger brothers'. Tuition fees had to be paid for the final three forms of secondary education. Compulsory uniforms were introduced (including pigtails for girls) and these remained until the end of the Soviet era. Out of experimentation developed a fine educational system with a particularly good record in the pure sciences.

The party did not attempt to control all aspects of culture during the 1920s, and a 1925 decree made this clear [5]. The defeat of the right, however, had serious repercussions, since several key writers were linked to Bukharin. The All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP)* was in the ascendant in 1928 and propagated the hegemony of working-class values in fiction. There was only one fly in the ointment as far as RAPP was concerned, namely the All-Russian Union of Writers (AUW).* The latter tried to keep politics out of their fiction but although RAPP disapproved strongly of this attitude, most of the leading Russian writers were members of the AUW. Undeterred, RAPP launched a campaign against Evgeny Zamyatin, the AUW chairman, and Boris Pilnyak, head of the Leningrad branch, accusing them of publishing anti-Soviet works

abroad. They were found guilty, and the AUW was dissolved and replaced by the All-Russian Union of Soviet Writers (AUSW).^{*} About half of the former AUW members were denied admission to the new organisation, and since they could not legally publish unless they were members, they faced a stark choice: recant and seek admission, or give up hope of publishing in the Soviet Union. RAPP was jubilant. However, in 1930 Stalin wrote an article for the party journal *Bolshevik*, in which he argued that nothing should be published which was contrary to the official point of view. This should have warned RAPP (which believed that literature should tell the truth, warts and all) that party goals might not always be identical with its own. In fact, the party disbanded both RAPP and AUSW in 1932 and set up a single organisation, the Union of Soviet Writers.

The end of RAPP was the end of an era in Russian literature. Writing during the years 1928–31 saw the glorification of the small man, as everyone pulled together to build the new USSR [125]. Plots displayed an absence of hierarchy and experts and managers faded into the background. The machine was worshipped; indeed only a country as backward as the Soviet Union could have placed so much faith in technology as the answer to man's problems. The rest of Europe had had the myth of the good machine exploded during the First World War, but for post-war Russia, noise was still a sign of progress, and the smoke belching out of factory chimneys a symbol of a brighter future.

After 1931 the literary hero changes. The manager, the expert, the party official, in other words the decision-makers, take over. The writer had also to be a skilled craftsman, the 'engineer of the soul', as Stalin graphically put it. His frame of reference was laid down by Andrei Zhdanov in April 1934 at the 1st Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers. Socialist realism was to be the guiding light [5]. In essence it meant building the brave new world with the bricks of the present. Literature was to uplift the reader so that he would become a more efficient constructor of socialism. It was to be deliberately didactic, and optimism was compulsory. Every novel, like a Hollywood picture of the period, had to have a happy ending as the hero or heroine battled against impossible odds to final victory.

The main hero, of course, was Stalin. Another was the Russian nation and its great figures; Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible walked again. This tide of nationalism boded ill for the other nationalities. Stalin formulated the slogan 'National in form, Socialist in content', to describe what was permissible. In reality this

amounted to little more than saying, for example, in Uzbek, what was being said about Stalin and Russia in Russian. The national heroes who had fought against imperial Russian control were banished; the local bards were swept aside and replaced by Russian luminaries. The purges which wiped out the non-Russian élites completed the process.

THE PURGES

All the show trials between 1928 and 1934 linked the accused to the economy [108]: the Shakhry engineers, the 'industrial party' trial, the Menshevik trial of 1931, the two secret trials of March 1933 which resulted in seventy state farm and People's Commissariat of Agriculture officials being shot, and the trial of the Metro-Vickers engineers. Other trials led to the passing of the death sentence on food scientists and bacteriologists. The trials all had to be carefully prepared since they had to appear plausible both inside the Soviet Union and outside. The paraphernalia of the great Purge Trials of 1936–38 was already in place: the written confessions, often to the most preposterous crimes, the bullying, sarcastic behaviour of the prosecutor, and the complete absence of any rules of evidence [108]. All the shortcomings of the economy were to be blamed on the unfortunates in the dock.

The only major trial with political overtones which occurred before 1934 was that involving a group around a communist called M.N. Ryutin. They had produced a 200-page indictment of Stalin and his regime from a Bukharinist point of view in late summer 1932, in which the Secretary-General was described as the 'evil genius of the Russian revolution who, motivated by personal desire for power and revenge, had brought the revolution to the brink of destruction'. Since they wanted Stalin removed, he took this to mean that they were going to kill him, and therefore demanded the death penalty. But a majority of the Politburo was opposed to such an extreme measure, and in the event Ryutin and his followers were merely expelled from the party. Since many other party members had seen the offending document and had not reported it, the opportunity was seized to purge the whole organisation. Some 800,000 members were expelled in 1933 and a further 340,000 in 1934. The Ryutin affair rankled with Stalin, and time and again during the Purge Trials reference was made to it.

Stalin was shaken by the suicide of his second wife, Nadezhda Alliluyeva, in November 1932. She took her own life as a protest

against the brutalities of collectivisation. Stalin never remarried and over time isolated himself more and more from his family. He seems to have lived surrounded by men, and although Khrushchev records that on one occasion he encountered a 'dark Caucasian beauty' in the Kremlin, she scurried away in an instant.

The murder of Sergei Kirov, party secretary in Leningrad, on 1 December 1934 set in motion a train of events which resulted in death for hundreds of thousands of people. Some of the details of the assassination are still not known, but it would appear that Stalin himself was implicated. Kirov was the only credible political alternative to Stalin, for he had been elected a secretary at the XVIIth Party Congress in 1934 at which Stalin had lost his post of Secretary-General. Kirov had been approached by delegates to stand for the post of Secretary-General but declined and reported this to Stalin. It is tempting to regard this episode as sealing Kirov's fate. With Kirov dead, much repressive legislation was introduced. One of the chief targets was the party itself, as inhibitions about spilling Bolshevik blood were cast aside. The XVIIth Congress, described at the time as the 'Congress of Victors', might more appropriately have been called the 'Congress of the Condemned', for 1,108 of its 1,966 delegates were executed and 98 of the 139 members of the CC elected at the Congress were shot in the years following.

The punitive legislation introduced – which included, for example, the death penalty for boys of twelve – was consonant with Stalin's views of the class struggle. Classes would disappear, he said, 'not as a result of the slackening of class conflict but as a result of its intensification'. The state would wither away 'not through the weakening of its power but through it becoming as strong as possible so as to defeat the remnants of the dying classes and to defend itself against capitalist encirclement'. This really was standing Marx on his head and is another example of Stalin's ideological relativism. An orthodox Marxist would expect classes to disappear as class conflict declines and for the state to wither away as the need for it disappears. Marx saw the state as an oppressive instrument used by the minority to oppress the majority.

Paradoxically, at the same time as these punitive measures were being applied, the Stalin constitution of 1936 – the 'most democratic in the world', as Stalin described it – came into effect. This introduced a bicameral legislature, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities, collectively known as the USSR Supreme Soviet.* The role of the local soviets now changed. Hitherto they had been seen as both legislative and executive organs, not mere

extensions of the central authority, constituting a unified system of equal links of varying sizes. They had also been seen as peculiar to the stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The 1936 constitution shattered the unity of the soviets. Local soviets (all those below republican level) were reduced to the status of local authorities. The Supreme Soviets ('the supreme organs of the soviets') became legislative organs; and the government ('the supreme organ of state power') became the executive organ. The Supreme Soviets even began to call themselves parliaments, despite Lenin's contempt for that institution.

The new constitution stated that the foundations of socialism had been laid and that the exploiting classes had ceased to exist. There were now only fraternal classes – the working class and the collective farm peasantry – and they coexisted harmoniously with the intelligentsia, defined as a stratum rather than a class since it owned no property.

Freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and of religious observance were guaranteed by the 1936 constitution. However, it was pointed out that the party remained the key institution and it was clear to every Soviet citizen that the party's interests would override any personal or group interest. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union appeared to be moving in the right direction and made a refreshing contrast to the rest of Europe where fascism was on the march.

There were three great Show Trials during the years 1936–38 [108]. The first took place in August 1936 and involved Kamenev and Zinoviev, along with sundry minor officials. Trotsky was introduced as the arch villain and it was claimed that he had ordered numerous assassinations and wreckings. Andrei Vyshinsky, who became notorious as a brutal prosecutor, demanded in his closing speech that these mad dogs be shot, every last one of them! They were all shot, but it was Stalin who was the real judge. Vyshinsky epitomised a certain type of official who slavishly served Stalin. As an ex-Menshevik he felt that he had repeatedly to reaffirm his credentials of loyalty to the regime.

The second great Show Trial should have involved Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy in September 1936, but it was cancelled. Tomsy cheated the executioner by taking his own life and it was possible that neither Bukharin nor Rykov would make the obligatory confession. Also Yagoda, the man in charge, lost his position to Nikolai Ezhov in September 1936. Yagoda's dismissal may have been connected with his failure to deliver Bukharin and

Rykov to the executioner. Everyone who knew Ezhov before he became head of the NKVD commented on how nice a man he was. There was, however, nothing nice about his two years in office (he was replaced by Lavrenty Beria in December 1938). They were the most dreadful peacetime years in the history of the Soviet Union. During the *Ezhovshchina*, the Ezhov times, blood flowed in rivers, and the guilt or innocence of the accused was completely immaterial. The political police had their plan targets like everyone else and were certainly not going to underfulfil them. According to a report, dated 11 December 1953, sent to Khrushchev and Malenkov, the total number condemned by the political police (*Cheka*, NKVD, etc.) between 1921 and 1953 was 4,060,306. The number shot was 799,455 of which no less than 681,692 were executed during 1937 and 1938, the *Ezhovshchina*. Lesser peaks of repression were 1930–33, 1942 and 1945–46. Another remarkable statistic is that over the years 1923–53, in the RSFSR alone, 39.1 million persons were sentenced by the regular courts (excluding the special NKVD courts, special councils and tribunals). If one excludes those under the age of 14 and over 60 years old, then during the course of one generation, from 1923 to 1953, every third citizen was sentenced for non-political offences. In comparison, the highest number in prison in the immediate pre-war period was 111,800 in 1912.

The second great Show Trial turned out to involve Pyatakov, mentioned by Lenin in his 'Testament': Sokolnikov, a signatory of the Brest-Litovsk treaty and later a Commissar for Finance who had resisted the wild targets of the first FYP; and various other party functionaries. They were all lumped together as an 'Anti-Soviet Trotskyist Centre' [1]. Pyatakov debased himself but nevertheless was shot. Sokolnikov died in a labour camp in 1939.

The turn of the military came in due course. Marshal Tukhachevsky, a deputy Commissar for Defence and a leading strategic thinker, and many other top military figures were branded as traitors and shot in June 1937. Then followed a veritable slaughter of the top brass. All eleven deputy Commissars of Defence and seventy-five of the eighty members of the Supreme Military Council were executed. All eight admirals were shot. In total 35,000, half of the officer corps, were either executed or imprisoned. As Khrushchev was to admit later, it had all been a ghastly mistake since the charges against the officers were baseless [12].

The last great Show Trial opened on 2 March 1938 and involved the pair who had previously slipped the net, Bukharin and Rykov.

Others thrown in included Yagoda, getting a taste of his own medicine. Vyshinsky branded them as the 'Bloc of the right wingers and Trotskyites', and the inevitable death sentence followed.

Foreign communists in exile in the Soviet Union were mown down like ripe corn, the NKVD being especially severe on the Germans and Poles. The greatest prize of all, however, eluded them until 21 August 1940, when an agent put an ice pick through Trotsky's skull in Mexico [5].

After such a catalogue of methodical madness the question must arise: was Stalin himself a victim of the frenzy of the period? Did he lose his sanity for a while? Svetlana Alliluyeva, his daughter, believes that officials such as Beria poisoned his mind and convinced him that the mad accusations were true [15; 50]. This is not so. Stalin himself edited the indictment against Pyatakov, Sokolnikov, Radek and others for the second great Show Trial. All lists of condemned were forwarded to Stalin and during 1938 at least 383 lists, containing 44,000 names of whom 39,000 were executed, were passed on to him. Stalin signed 362 lists, Molotov 373, Voroshilov 195, Kaganovich 191 and Zhdanov 177. Stalin's Politburo colleagues were enthusiastic in their support of these repressions. They often wrote comments in the margin encouraging the NKVD to step up the torture: for example, against certain names: 'beat again and again!' [109] [Doc. 13]. The terror was turned off like a tap in 1939, but the show trials had had a momentum of their own. The NKVD did not have to go and look for suspects; they were inundated with denunciations [Doc. 14]. Such was the spirit of the times that in order to avoid being denounced one had to denounce everyone else first. There were even targets set for the number of people one had to denounce in a given period.

An understanding of the period can be gleaned from the fortunes of two persons caught up in the NKVD net, Osip and Nadezhda Mandelstam [38]. Thousands, perhaps millions, had similar experiences.

Osip Mandelstam was a gifted poet but never became a Bolshevik. Like many other writers his patron was Bukharin. He was arrested in May 1934 for composing a poem which contained an unflattering reference to Stalin [Doc. 8]: 'All we hear is the Kremlin mountaineer/The murderer and peasant slayer.' His wife Nadezhda recalls the techniques used to force confessions [Doc. 9]: lack of sleep, bright lights shining in the eyes, poor food, the deliberate telling of lies to confuse the prisoner and make him more anxious – 'such and such a person had been arrested and had confessed

everything' – and physical beatings, although Mandelstam was spared these. This goes a long way towards explaining why innocent men and women confessed to the most outlandish crimes. Broken down they were willing to admit anything providing they could just get some sleep and be left in peace. Of course some did not break down: they were the prisoners who never appeared at the trials. Nadezhda Mandelstam draws a distinction between the type of person who was an interrogator before 1937 and afterwards. Until 1937 the Chekist or NKVD man was often well read in Russian literature, the sort of person who would have been all in favour of RAPP and delighted to display his culture, convinced that his work was helping to build the new Russia. In 1937 a new type took over; men who had little culture and no beliefs, and were only concerned with meeting their quota of confessions. Osip Mandelstam's interrogator, like many of the pre-1937 men, himself became a victim of the purges and was shot.

Denunciations flowed into the NKVD in torrents. Before 1937 they had to have a semblance of truth to be effective; afterwards it did not matter. Denunciations became a convenient way of acquiring something desirable. If one's superior was found guilty, promotion was in prospect. If neighbours were removed, a flat would become vacant. Personal relations became hazardous, for anyone might let something slip which would then be reported to the police. Spontaneous and personal openness became things of the past. Parents could never be completely frank at home, since something they said might be repeated at school with disastrous consequences. If the head of the household was sentenced the whole family fell into disgrace. Wives and children could then be expelled from the cities and obliged to live at least 105 km away. Life for the convicted was relatively easy before 1937 [Doc. 10], but then things got worse. Wives were interned in camps and small children were confined in special institutions [Doc. 11].

Mandelstam was saved from death by the intervention of Bukharin. He was packed off to the Urals, but a further plea resulted in him and his wife being allowed to reside in Voronezh. They spent three years in exile in Voronezh and returned to Moscow in May 1937. Mandelstam had even tried to write an Ode to Stalin in January 1937 in order to rehabilitate himself and his wife but the words would not come. He and his wife were again thrown out of Moscow in June 1937 and told to reside at least 105 km from the capital, since they were 'convicted persons'. They eventually moved to Kalinin, north-west of Moscow. Mandelstam

travelled frequently to Moscow and begged the Union of Soviet Writers for work. He and his wife were given accommodation in a rest home east of Moscow, but shortly after their arrival, on 1 May 1938, Mandelstam was arrested and was never seen again. His wife returned to Kalinin and narrowly escaped arrest. She then moved to a small town north-east of Moscow, coming in regularly to the capital in search of information about her husband. She eventually discovered that he had died in a labour camp, probably in December 1938.

FOREIGN POLICY

The rise of fascism was completely misinterpreted in Moscow, where it was assumed to be the most predatory face of finance capital, with only a limited capacity to endure, if it ever came to power. The Comintern, the Russian Communist Party wearing its foreign suit, came to the conclusion that the German National Socialists (NSDAP)* were claiming to do the impossible. They promised to put German industry back on its feet, which implied that big business would do very well, but at the same time they canvassed the votes of small businessmen, shopkeepers and farmers. They promised the latter they would protect them against unfair competition and secure a bright future for them, yet in order to do this the Nazis would have to restrict the activities of the industrial giants. In other words the Nazis could not satisfy both sides. The Italian fascists were not seen as a threat to the Soviet Union, so why should German fascism be different? The Social Democrats (SPD)* were regarded as the main enemy and labelled 'social fascists'. In Germany the SPD was the main supporter of the Weimar republic, and it was assumed in Moscow that the destruction of the SPD would topple the republic.

The breath-taking ease with which Hitler and the NSDAP swept the Communist Party of Germany (KPD)* off the political stage, the pusillanimity of the other political parties and the Führer's ruthlessness in disposing of Ernst Röhm and the SA (*Sturmabteilung* or storm troops) as part of a deal with the German army, the *Reichswehr*, rudely awakened Moscow. The Comintern, at its VIIIth and final Congress in August 1935, called for the formation of a popular front. Western governments were slow to react. After all, the previous Comintern policy had been to appeal to rank-and-file social democrats over the heads of their leaders, who were publicly vilified.

The Soviet Union set out to repair her fences with the rest of Europe. She joined the League of Nations in 1934 and signed a treaty with France in 1935 which was extended to embrace Czechoslovakia [5]. The 1936 constitution, partly for external consumption, made the USSR more attractive. However, 1936 was a bad year for Moscow. The German remilitarisation of the Rhineland, the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact by Germany, Italy and Japan, and the onset of the Spanish Civil War, with the Soviet Union as the main ally of the Spanish republic, boded ill for Soviet hopes.

The Munich Agreement of September 1938, from which the Soviet Union was excluded, led Stalin to doubt whether France and Great Britain would ever stand up to Germany.

Stalin had at least two alternatives so far as policy towards Germany was concerned. He could enter into an alliance with France and Great Britain and thereby effectively checkmate the Third Reich, which could not face a war on two fronts. However, the Soviet leader could not be absolutely sure that France and Great Britain would remain committed if war with Germany did break out. Stalin's other option was to sign a pact with Hitler and unleash the dogs of war westwards. When he came to the conclusion that war was inevitable his main objective was to keep the USSR out of the conflict. After what he had done to the Red Army and Navy this was the most prudent course. The Soviet Union began negotiating seriously in May 1939, when Litvinov, a Jew, was replaced as Commissar for Foreign Affairs by Molotov. The German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov in Moscow on 23 August 1939 (Stalin and Hitler never met) and it was consequently only a matter of time before Hitler attacked in the west. Moscow was alarmed by the rapid success of the German *Blitzkrieg* in Poland and by the fact that neither France nor Great Britain made any move to attack Germany. Stalin even began to fear that the *Wehrmacht* (German armed forces) would not stop at the agreed demarcation line in Poland and would carry on to invade the Soviet Union. He therefore ordered the Red Army to enter Poland in September 1939 to secure the USSR's slice of the bargain. France and Great Britain obligingly did not treat this as an act of war against them.

With Finland part of her zone of influence, Moscow pressed the Finns to accept a frontier away from Leningrad. The Soviets also wanted naval bases on Finnish soil, but Helsinki would not countenance this. The Red Army therefore launched an assault

against Finland on 30 November 1939, but the Winter War highlighted its deficiencies, and led to the death of some 200,000 of its soldiers [5]. In order to forestall intervention by France and Great Britain, a lenient peace was signed in March 1940. Great efforts were made afterwards to improve the fighting capacity of the Red Army.

Hitler regarded a war between Germany and the Soviet Union as inevitable. The world was too small for two such ambitious ideologies as fascism and communism. Stalin considered that a conflict could be avoided. He thought that Hitler could be bought off with concessions and believed that Germany had to defeat Great Britain first. This would give the Soviet Union the breathing space necessary to build up her armed might to such a pitch that the *Wehrmacht* would not invade.

Stalin handled his relations with Hitler very badly. Since the USSR was the weaker power he had to appease the German dictator. When Molotov visited Berlin in November 1940 Hitler proposed that the Soviet Union should join the Tripartite Pact which linked Germany, Italy and Japan with Berlin's east European satellites. The bait was Soviet gains in the Black Sea area and in Central Asia. Molotov astonishingly then produced his own shopping list. Finland and southern Bukovina (Romania) were to fall under Soviet sway; Bulgaria was to form part of a Soviet security zone, as was Sweden; and notice was served that the Soviets had future designs on Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece and even on part of German-occupied Poland. The Soviets also wanted military bases in the Dardanelles and a Soviet-Danish condominium over the Baltic. Shortly afterwards Stalin accepted the invitation to join the Tripartite Pact and demanded that the Soviet Union be permitted to expand through Iran to the Persian Gulf. Since the USSR militarily was in no position to make such demands on Germany, the only result of this *démarche* was to annoy Hitler and to fuel his doubts about the reliability of his new partner.

Stalin's demands revealed the weakness of the Soviet Union, and instead of pacifying Hitler they provoked him. Just why did Stalin act so clumsily? Perhaps he thought that if he did not make any demands Hitler would have regarded the Soviet Union as weak and afraid to assert its interests. Stalin remained unaware of his blunder, however, and the German invasion of 22 June 1941 took him completely by surprise, even though he had been forewarned by his own intelligence services. He simply refused to believe the information. The *Wehrmacht* had intended to attack earlier, in May

1941, but had been detained in Greece and Yugoslavia. Stalin thought he was safe in June, since this would be too late for a summer offensive.

If the prime goal of Soviet foreign policy during the 1930s was to keep the country out of a European war, then it was a dismal failure. The rise of fascism was looked on with equanimity; indeed, the NSDAP and the KPD cooperated from time to time and were even known to share the same offices in some places. Stalin thought that the Second World War would be a re-run of the First, with the European powers becoming bogged down. When they had exhausted themselves the USSR would be free to intervene and do as she pleased. Again, this was a disastrous miscalculation. All the USSR succeeded in doing was to make Germany even stronger. A Machiavelli might argue that in the end it all turned out right for the Soviet Union. Not only was Germany defeated but Moscow ended up occupying part of Germany, thereby making the USSR a great power. This, however, is no justification for a policy which unleashed a holocaust which killed over fifty million and maimed millions of others in body and mind. Also, this argument assumes that the Soviet occupation of eastern Europe was a net benefit to Moscow. All the European powers must assume some responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities, but had France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union acted decisively together in 1939, Germany could not have launched a European and eventually a world war.

STALINISM TRIUMPHANT

Stalinism flowered in a responsive soil. Without his army of willing cohorts, Stalin could not have propelled the Soviet Union into breakneck industrialisation and collectivisation and maintained the pace after the initial enthusiasm had ebbed. A corps of state and party officials came into being who were welded to the Stalin chariot [129]. The bloodletting and the violence of collectivisation found many wanting, and they passed from the scene and were replaced by those who were not so squeamish. Battle-scarred, ruthless and dedicated, the new men really were people of a special mould. Since their goal was socialism, any measure which advanced the USSR towards that glorious culmination was justified. If mistakes were made they paled into insignificance when placed alongside the triumphs of the period. Since capitalism had been left behind, what was being built in the USSR had to be socialism.

What were Stalin's aims during the 1930s? Simply to make

the Soviet Union politically, economically and militarily strong. The greater the industrial growth, the stronger the USSR became. The terror was used to produce a pliable, malleable work force, to destroy opposition to central directives, to render everyone insecure, from the top official to the collective farmer, and to shift blame for all the shortcomings of everyday life on to the shoulders of those arrested and sentenced.

The typical Stalinist official was of peasant origin. He eagerly followed the party leadership and quickly accepted the view that all opinions which differed from those of the leadership were treasonous. The XVIIth Party Congress in 1934 can be seen as a watershed. Eighty per cent of the delegates had joined the party before 1920 and hence really belonged to the Leninist élite. At the Congress, however, Stalin secured the abolition of Rabkrin,* the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, which supervised government officials, and of the Central Control Commission, which was responsible for party officials. This breakthrough, allied to Kirov's murder, opened the floodgates of violence. The purges swept most of the Leninist élite to their doom. They were replaced in turn by the Stalinist élite. Some of the Stalinist cadres were motivated by idealism, some were attracted by the perquisites of office [*Doc. 15*], others by the feeling of power which their position afforded them.

Stalin liked military metaphors. He referred to the party as the General Staff of the proletariat (*Doc. 1*). At a CC plenum in March 1937 he divided the party into leaders and the led. There were 3,000–4,000 senior leaders, who were the generals; the 30,000–40,000 middle-rank officials made up the officer corps, and the 100,000–150,000 lower-level leaders were the NCOs. This neatly illustrates Stalin's hierarchical way of thinking. No one had any right to an opinion unless his seniority entitled him to one. Stalin's attitude to people was the reverse of the story he told about the incident in Siberia [*Doc. 16*]. In practice he was just as callous or fatalist as the Siberians.

The way Stalin projected himself is instructive. During the 1920s he claimed to be the only true apostle of Lenin; others, such as Trotsky and Zinoviev, were anti-Leninists. Gradually, Stalin became the equal of Lenin, and the phrase 'Lenin-Stalin' made its appearance. The slogan 'Stalin is the Lenin of today' marked the next stage, in which Stalin was ahead of Lenin. Stalin was projected as the father of the nation and the epithet 'Stalinist' guaranteed success. He could work miracles and his intervention produced exaltation and joy [*Doc. 17*]. So successful was the projection of this

image [Doc. 18] that many people accepted it and believed that all the injustices of the 1930s were the fault of nasty and incompetent officials. Some went to their deaths convinced that if only comrade Stalin had known what was really going on he would have stepped in to right the injustice.

Stalin's rise meant that the role of the party changed. It was no longer true that the party knew best. Stalin's thought became the fount of all wisdom.

There was an assault on learning after 1928 so as to destroy the influence and power of the 'old' élites [125]. They were replaced by new élites whose attitude to learning was radically different. All intellectual activity was to be channelled into fighting the battle for socialism. Learning was demystified, and anyone with the right attitude, a Stalinist attitude, could become a specialist. Folk heroes appeared in many fields: Makarenko in education, Vilyams in grassland management, Lysenko in agrobiology, Marr in linguistics and Michurin in fruit-farming. The fact that practically everything they preached was dismissed out of hand in the west only strengthened their position. What else could one expect from bourgeois scientists jealous of the successes of socialism?

Hence Stalinism meant modernisation, it meant technology, it meant a bright future, it meant victory. The tide of Russian nationalism also rose as national self-adulation increased. This, as has been mentioned, spelled doom for the non-Russian élites.

How did Stalin's state function? The twin pillars of power were the party and the government. The party acted as a parallel government and checked on the implementation of the plans. The flow of information was restricted. The more important an official, the more he was told. The party watched the government, but the political police watched both. Key decision-making was centred in Stalin's own chancellery, presided over by a trusted official, Poskrebyshev. All the threads came together in the chancellery, all the information was pieced together there, the jigsaw was complete. Stalin was the only person in the entire country who saw the whole picture and he skilfully used the information available to him. Stalin's power was not based on control of the government or the party or the political police. It involved exploiting all three. It was vital to Stalin that he should maintain several independent sources of information; in that way he hoped to judge which source was misleading. After 1936 he successfully prevented any body, be it the Politburo or the CC of the party or the government, meeting as a group and taking counsel together independent of him. He preferred

to consult individuals or small groups, and here his tactics were based on setting one person against another. This explains why there were only two Party Congresses between 1934 and 1953, for they were frankly unnecessary. Stalin very seldom left Moscow. He disliked mass meetings and was always conscious of his Georgian accent. He restricted the number of people who had direct access to him and in so doing created a mystique around his person.

Why and how did Stalinism function? The destruction of the old ruling strata, the more able farmers, the *kulaks* and the old intelligentsia left a void. It was inevitable that the authoritarian political culture which was just being challenged by civil society (autonomous institutions outside the control of the government) and the new élites (industrialists, lawyers and so on) before 1914 should reassert itself. Lenin changed his views on the state, moving from a weak to a strong state. This fitted the pre-1917 Russian tradition. Autonomous labour organisations, such as factory committees and trade unions, were emasculated because they wished to share in decision-making. No independent institutions were permitted to emerge. Hence all the new institutions and organisations were instrumental, to serve Bolshevik, later Stalinist, goals. The Soviet constitution afforded soviets legislative and executive functions but this constitution was at variance with the newly emerging Bolshevik state. The failure of world revolution isolated Soviet Russia and it had to survive on its own. Outside ideas, 'bourgeois' ideas, were by definition counter-revolutionary. The violent internecine strife which illuminated the 1920s encouraged authoritarianism. Utopianism was given its head during the first Five-Year Plan and led to untold misery for millions of peasants and others. Bukharin, perceptively, warned of the 'Leviathan state' which would emanate from the 'military-feudal exploitation of the peasantry'. The Bolsheviks were determined to eliminate the peasant *mir** or community. The *muzhik** had to depart the stage.

The type of economic planning adopted shaped the regime. Bolshevik rejection of the market was total and this was in part due to the fact that the market was only just emerging in Russia in 1914. Communist planners declined to base their plans on value and price and concentrated on material balances instead. The former would have afforded enterprises the opportunity, in their own interests, to achieve the plan more effectively by cutting costs. Costs, in fact, were ignored in the early years of the first FYP. Material balances meant that an increasing number of quantitative goals, which could not encapsulate quality and innovation, had to be set,

thereby requiring more and more bureaucrats. Stalin, significantly, complained of the difficulty of obtaining objective information about enterprise potential during the 1930s. Planners were reduced to increasing annual targets by a certain amount (the ratchet principle). Stalin was forced to legalise the market, but only the *kolkhoz* market. Illegal markets began to develop to make up for the lacunae which the planners could not or would not cope with.

The reasons for the purges are still unclear. Lewin sees them as a means of demonologising the opposition, the majority of the population [90]. Such were the tensions within society, a predominantly peasant society, that Stalin and his co-leaders adopted a peasant idiom. By so doing they hoped to deflect peasant anger at prevailing conditions away from the regime. The purges go through various stages. There are Show Trials. There are purges of local officials with locals being encouraged to denounce local bureaucrats and vent their anger on them. Mobilisation becomes significant in proletarianising the bureaucracy. The same is true of industry.

Recent research [79] does not attempt to provide a monocausal reason for the purges. The totalitarian approach which views the purges as the logical consequences of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, as a product of the inner logic of absolute rule and utopia in power, has not been confronted with a powerful counter-argument. What is clear, however, is that the social scope of the purges appears to be more restricted and less indiscriminate than previously thought. Research now concentrates on how the purges were implemented. Viola (in [79]) demonstrates that the purges in the countryside appear to have revitalised among peasants old methods of disposing of socially marginal persons in the villages. Rittersporn (in [79]) wonders if the recurring theme of conspiracy in Stalinist politics may have been a psycho-social consequence of the structure of power itself. Since power was mainly structured along personal and institutional networks of loyalties, party and state bureaucrats were predisposed to perceiving intra-bureaucratic conflict as conspiracy. The purges affected industrial workers to a much lesser degree than managers and technical personnel. Stakhanovism was pugnacious populism and contained elements of social demagoguery. Previous research did not notice that in the armed forces there was a move to expel all officers from the party, which was independent of the arrests and executions. Getty (in [79]) suggests several different explanations for the purges but concludes that there may not have been any identifiable aims at all when Stalin took the decision to

initiate them. (This would appear quite erroneous since Stalin devoted great attention to whom should be purged, at least at the top.)

The mass mobilisation and the assault on established élites and bureaucracies are reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution in China, which began in 1966 and was aimed at removing bureaucrats and indeed everyone in authority so as to introduce new cohorts who would be more responsive to the thoughts of Chairman Mao. It is as if the Stalin leadership were dissatisfied with the new bureaucratic élites which emerged. They had to be swept away to make way for new cohorts which in turn would be decimated. The party-state became more and more dependent on its bureaucrats as the economy grew but, ironically, the iconoclastic attitude to local officials meant that they could not be relied upon to implement orders. The low level of expertise was part of the problem, but the other aspect was the impossible demands visited on local officials and managers. They, in turn, developed defence mechanisms, including colluding to report overblown successes, to such an extent that a permanent tension developed between the centre and the periphery. The centre reacted by attempting to eliminate horizontal links and networks.

For example, in 1934 the existing economic regions were divided into 79 smaller *oblasts*, the principal territorial subdivision of a republic, plus the cities of Moscow and Leningrad. Between 1934 and 1944 Urals *oblast*, which had developed into an economic and political centre to rival Moscow, was split into six new *oblasts*. What did this restructuring of the economic administration lead to? To the destruction of established structures, to the reshuffling of personnel, to the violation of economic and cultural life. It undermined specialisation and cooperation. One of the reasons why Aleksei Rykov, a former chairman of *Sovnarkom*, was executed was because he had argued that the economy could not be run from the centre. The same happened in the northern regions. The whole Arctic region was divided among the central ministries so that no central body existed to control the colonisation of the north. Thus, the northern minorities lost all control over their own existence. The great central ministries attempted to gain control over all enterprises within their remit. However, it is doubtful if the ministries at the centre could have been effectively coordinated.

Hence Stalinism flowered for a short time but sowed the seeds of its own impotence. Bent on destroying local autonomy, especially in non-Russian areas, it was not able to put anything dynamic in its place. The late 1930s saw the gradual decline of Stalinism.